

The terrible, frustrating spiritual personal exercises described in chapter 7 are not those of an unsaved sinner. These are the valid and heartfelt experiences of a saved soul devoted to the God who saved him by His marvelous grace. An unsaved soul is dead in sin, dead to God and has absolutely no such motion toward God. “There is none that seeketh after God,” Rom. 3:9; “While we were yet sinners. . .,” Rom. 5:6, “While we were enemies . . .,” Rom. 5:8, etc. Any motions of an unsaved soul toward God are solely self seeking, self centered efforts to do something, enough, to somehow evade the judgement of God for sins and avoid going to hell. But now having been born again I have eternal life. I have become a “new man,” a man (or woman) that desires to please God. But initially I find myself frustrated because of the powerful, obstructing influence of my “old man,” that what I was before I was saved. It is as if I am two personalities warring within me. And the New me keeps losing the battle for control of my life to the Old me. But all is not lost. And I am not lost. Nor am I bound to a constant futile struggle against sin in the flesh to be continually pursued until, indeed, finally and

perpetually resolved by my death or the Rapture. That is neither God’s purpose nor His way. The believer is not abandoned to that prospect by God and is not to abandon himself to that prospect.

Everybody alive has tried to reform himself (and more often even tried to reform someone else) but usually with little success. The annual ritual of making (and breaking) New Year’s resolutions is all too familiar. Diets are notoriously difficult to uphold even when consequences of failure are life threatening. The flesh is unable to control the impulses of even innocent hungering, much less sinful lust. So what is to be done for the believer?

Paul systematically clarifies the issues and resolves the dilemma. He acknowledges that the Law is spiritual, that is, there is nothing wrong with it before God. It is I that is out of order. I am carnal, fleshly, not spiritual and sold under sin. Sold into slavery. A slave to sin. But having been justified by faith I, the new me, am in conflict with the old me’s actions. Paul’s description is all too apt because it reflect’s his own past experience, and that of many other believers. He itemizes:

that which I [actively] do	I allow not [do not own, understand, <i>or</i> acknowledge]
what I would [delight to be actively doing]	that do I not [do not practice]
what I hate [to be doing]	that do I [this I am doing, <i>or</i> this I practice]
If then I do that which I would not [don’t want to],	I consent unto [agree] the law that it is good.
it is no more I that do it [work it out]	but [the] sin that dwells in me.
I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,)	dwells no good thing,
for to will [desire to do good] is present with me;	how to [ability to] perform that which is good I find not
The good that I would [desire to do]	I do not
But the evil which I would not [don’t desire to practice]	that I do [practice]
If I do that I would not [do not desire to practice]	it is no more [no longer] I that do it but sin that dwells in me.
when I would do [be practicing] good	the evil is [always] present with me.
I delight [rejoice] in the law of God after [according to] the inward man	but I see another [different kind of] law in my members, warring [waging war] against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity [making me a prisoner] to the law of sin which is in my members [mouth, hands, eyes, feet, etc.]
O wretched man that I am! Who shall	deliver me from the body of this death?
Therefore with the mind I myself serve the law of God	but with the flesh the law of sin

The question has finally devolved from **How?** . . . to

Who? . . .

Not, “*how* shall I . . . ?”

But, “*who* shall deliver me . . . ?”

I can’t do it! Another can! Only one Other! The Lord Jesus Christ! Now God can respond. And immediately

there is an explosion of thanksgiving for it is **God** who delivers. He delivers me for Him, not I trying to deliver me for Him. I am proven totally inadequate. He is totally adequate. What a relief! What a deliverance! What liberty! What joy! What a full and abundant life we have in Christ. The fullness of it is revealed next. It begins with this summary:

“Therefore there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

No condemnation for sinful acts or for the indwelling sin nature that generates and sponsors those acts. The first because Christ died for my sins. The other because I am in Christ Jesus and as a result walk after [according to] the Spirit. This is an unconditional statement of fact for

faith, not an exhortation or warning as many try to take it.* Taken otherwise it simply contradicts and effectively undoes the very victory over sin in the flesh just proclaimed for all those in Christ Jesus.

* This last phrase of verse one is not found in most reliable manuscripts. Furthermore, translations that have attempted to include it often distort its force resulting in an implication that maintaining our salvation rests upon our walk, our behavior. This would be a direct contradiction of the first phrase of the verse which states there is **no condemnation** [judgement] to those in Christ Jesus. Another way to put it is:

“Therefore there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, [for they] walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Or:

“Therefore there is no condemnation to them who in Christ Jesus walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”(Darby note).

The idea is that the saints are positionally in Christ Jesus and therefore positionally walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. As a result ideally they walk, in practice, not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Verse 4 gives that thought. The walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh is what characterizes us who are positionally in Christ Jesus. More next time.

By Ron Canner, October 17, 2007.

NOTE.

The term “law” is used in various ways in these chapters, and throughout the New Testament. For instance:

- A. Law as a controlling influence. “The law of sin and death,” “law of sin in the flesh,” etc.
- B. Law as a rule to be observed , directives set down for obedience by a higher authority sometimes God, sometimes kings or other governing bodies.
- C. The specific Law of Moses, given the Children of Israel by God at Mount Sinai through Moses.

The context usually decides which is meant.

R. C.